

June 28, 2004

The Honorable Ed Markey
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Christopher Smith
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Markey and Smith:

I am writing on behalf of the American Nurses Association (ANA) to applaud your efforts to promote access to quality Alzheimer's care. Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2004 (H.R. 4595) is crucial to improving Alzheimer's research, assisting those who care for Alzheimer's patients, and promoting public awareness of the disease. ANA is the only full-service national association representing Registered Nurses (RNs). Through our 54 constituent member associations, we represent RNs in all practice settings throughout the United States.

ANA is pleased to support the Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2004. There is a critical need for the increased research resources contained in this bill. One in 10 people over the age of 65, and nearly half of those over the age of 85 (estimated 4,500,000 Americans) suffer from Alzheimer's disease. This number is expected to increase dramatically with the aging of the population.

The moderate investment in research provided in the Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act will make real strides in meeting national research goals. The overarching goal is to reduce the number of cases of Alzheimer's disease by more than one-third by the middle of the century. If achieved, this goal would reduce the number of baby boomers with moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease by 60 percent.

The Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act would also support the family caregivers who literally underpin the Alzheimer's care delivery system. Ten percent of Americans have a family member with the disease. 70 percent of people with Alzheimer's disease live at home. The average annual cost of unreimbursed care for Alzheimer's patients who live at home is \$12,500.

The Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act will help address part of the enormous burden placed on America's family caregivers by providing assistance for the medications and care required by the disease. It will also provide these families with the respite care, counseling and training that they desperately need.

Thank you for your commitment to this critical health and social issue. ANA looks forward to working with you to promote the enactment of the Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2004.

Sincerely,

Rose Gonzalez, MPS, RN
Director, Government Affairs